

ANS Correspondence

Bowen, Arthur L.
[State Bank of Chicago]

1927

State Bank of Chicago

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Chicago September 1, 1927.

Mr. Edward T. Newell, President,
American Numismatic Society,
Broadway and 156th Street,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Newell:-

At the suggestion of Mr. R.E. Davis, Secretary of the Chicago Coin Club, I write asking information concerning a problem we are up against in connection with the new home of the State Bank of Chicago, now under construction.

The architectural firm in charge of the designing and planning of the building has suggested that in our main banking floor we use a series of medallions featuring or at least patterned after particularly interesting coins from epochs in the history of monies of the world. These coins will be reproduced in plaster and enlarged to the diameter of between 2 and 2½ feet. They will be placed above each column (24) and will be at least 30 feet from the floor. I mention this thinking of the fact that possibly the artists in modeling will minimize certain details while enlarging on others in order to secure the best possible bas-relief effect considering the height.

After talking the matter over with Mr. Davis we arrived at a sort of working plan - at least it is something from which to make a start. It is as follows:

With 24 medallions to make, we thought that six definite periods would cover the full period, outlining them as follows:

1. 4 Greek (500 B.C.) Ancient Greek - Aegaeon - Athens - Alexander - Syracuse. *1000 B.C.?*
2. 4 Roman (55 B.C. - 400 A.D.) Roman Aes (Janus) - 2 Roman Emperors (possibly Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar). We are thinking of Janus and the two Roman Emperor coins as offering opportunity to be enlarged upon in connection with those names as being the root of the names of three of our calendar months, for use in a little descriptive booklet to be distributed to

Janu.

Mar.

State Bank of Chicago

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the public telling the story of these medallions.

- Engle 12/1/16*
AP-73
3. 4 Mediaeval. (- 1400 A.D.). Choice of four coins offering the best possible decorative effect.
 - 4. 4 - \$50. California Gold Piece - Spanish Dollar (Pieces of Eight?) - 2 Scandinavian pieces (possibly Adolphus and one of Charles XII. *1.*
 5. Colonial 1652 - 1700 A.D. Pine Tree Shilling - Maryland - Fergio - Nova Constellateo. *✓*
 6. 1773-1884 A.D. American Chain Cent - Dollar 1802 - Dollar 1836 - Trade Dollar. *✓*
- Constance
Horn
Barnett
Edw.
Thaler*

We understand that plaster replicas of these coins can be secured at a nominal charge. We are anxious to find out if such copies of the coins enumerated above can be secured. If so, how much will they cost and how soon can we secure them, for the time is short.

Any suggestions or improvements you can make in our choise would be appreciated very much indeed, for as you can well understand we feel that if the idea is worth working out it must be given real thought.

Trusting you can be of assistance in this matter,

I am

Yours very truly,

Arthur L. Bowen
Arthur L. Bowen
Advertising Department.

P.S. We also desire to assure ourselves that we are in no way breaking the letter of the U.S.A. laws in creating such medallions.

A.L.B.

September 6, 1927

Mr. Arthur L. Bowen,
Advertising Department,
State Bank of Chicago,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of September 1st addressed to Mr. Edward T. Newell, President of this Society, has been referred by him to me.

We can furnish plaster casts of coins such as you desire within two or three days after your selection is made. The intrinsic value of these plaster casts is slight, but the amount of time involved in preparing them makes it unprofitable for us to undertake the making of them unless we charge a dollar for each cast. If you care to have us go ahead on such a basis we shall be glad to do so.

With regard to your selection, Mr. Davis has advised you to good purpose. Your brief outline does not regard the fact that there are two sides to each coin and in failing to distinguish which you want, there is ambiguity. In the second group, for example, there would be at least three heads - the fourth selection not having been made. On the side at which these are to be seen, there would be little to distinguish one from the other. This is increasingly true when objects other than heads are depicted on the coins in a necessarily smaller scale and I think the selection of the groups should avoid any such difficulties.

You ask about United States laws, I believe these, in intent, at any rate, are concerned only with coins actually in circulation and we feel that you would not get into trouble with the pieces selected.

Group 5 is admirable from the decorative as well as the historical standpoint. Group 6 is not so happy. The chain cent might not carry at the distance from which the design is to be seen and the 1836 dollar was really a pattern, although others similar succeeded it.

Mr. Arthur L. Bowen

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My suggestion would be that you have us go ahead and make twenty-four casts and that you submit them to your architects, substituting for any that may be eliminated in the process. If you care to have us submit, say, half a dozen additional alternatives, there might be some saving in time. We are glad to have you write that "The idea must be given real thought." A number of similar institutions are using such medallions in their decorative plans and nothing is so readily criticized as such selections. The greatest difficulty arises in endeavoring to reconcile questions of decoration with some forordained plan of selection.

You speak of the need for haste. May I point out that if these medallions are to be done well, they can probably be installed at any time after the completion of the building and that, therefore, that time spend in a careful selection now is not really lost.

Awaiting your further word, I am

Very truly yours,

Secretary

SPN:MB